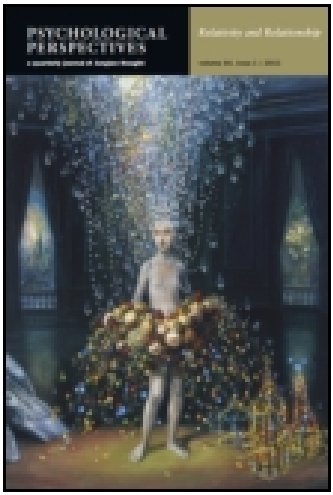
This article was downloaded by: [Tulane University]
On: 03 January 2015, At: 09:40
Publisher: Taylor & Francis
Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954
Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Psychological Perspectives: A Quarterly Journal of Jungian Thought

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/upyp20

Excerpt from Goethe's Faust: Notes for a Jungian Commentary

Edward P. Edinger

Published online: 27 May 2009.

To cite this article: Edward P. Edinger (2009) Excerpt from Goethe's Faust: Notes for a Jungian Commentary , Psychological Perspectives: A Quarterly Journal of Jungian Thought, 52:2, 192-198

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00332920902880697

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions

Downloaded by [Tulane University] at 09:40 03 January 2015

Psychological Perspectives, 52: 192–198, 2009
Copyright © C. G. Jung Institute of Los Angeles
ISSN: 0033-2925 print / 1556-3030 online
DOI: 10.1080/00332920902880697

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Excerpt from *Goethe's* Faust: *Notes for a Jungian Commentary*

Edward P. Edinger

Downloaded by [Tulane University] at 09:40 03 January 2015

Introduction

Jung has demonstrated in *Aion* that the Christian eon is characterized by a process of enantiodromia[1] in which the figure of Christ is replaced by Antichrist.

> The dechristianization of our world, the Luciferian development of science and technology, and the frightful material and moral destruction left behind by the second World War have been compared more than once with the *eschatological* events foretold in the New Testament. These, as we know, are concerned with the coming of the Antichrist. . . . The Apocalypse is full of expectations of terrible things that will take place at the end of time, before the marriage of the Lamb. This shows plainly that the *anima christiana* has a sure knowledge not only of the existence of an adversary but also of his future usurpation of power.[2]

According to astrological symbolism the second fish in the constellation Pisces, associated with Antichrist, comes to the fore in the sixteenth century, coinciding roughly with the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Scientific Revolution.[3] It is highly relevant that the Faust legend began at the same time, gathering around an actual historical personage, Dr. John

Goethe's Faust: *Notes for a Jungian Commentary.* Edward Edinger. Copyright © 1990 by Edward Edinger. Permission to reprint kindly granted by Dianne Cordic and Daryl Sharp (Inner City Books, Box 1271, Station Q, Toronto, Canada M4T 2P4).

Philemonis sacrum
Fausti poenitentia.

Jan. 1959.

C.G. Jung

Inscription carved by Jung over the entrance to his Bollingen tower:
Philemonis Sacrum—Fausti Poenitentia
(Shrine of Philemon—Repentance of Faust).

Downloaded by [Tulane University] at 09:40 03 January 2015

Faustus, who lived from approximately 1480 to 1540. Contemporary with Dr. Faustus were: Leonardo (1452–1519), Columbus (1451–1506), Machiavelli (1469–1527), Erasmus (ca. 1466–1536), Copernicus (1473–1543), Luther (1483–1546), Paracelsus (1493–1541), Vesalius (1514–1564).

The Faust legend is a corollary to the coming of Antichrist. In the sixteenth century the God-image fell out of heaven (metaphysical projection) and landed in the human psyche. In the course of this transition from heaven to earth it undergoes an enantiodromia from Christ to Antichrist. This event paves the way for Faust's encounter with Mephistopheles. The happening was predicted long ago in *Revelation* 12:12: "Woe to the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time."[4]

Of course the artists, scholars, explorers, reformers and scientists of the sixteenth century did not consider their activities as devilish. They were all good Christians, they thought, who were excited by the expansion of human knowledge and energy. But things looked different from the standpoint of the unconscious which, like a compensating dream, generated the Faust legend.

During the past 500 years the Faust legend has been told again and again in poetry, prose and music. E. M. Butler's *The Fortunes of Faust* describes fifty different versions. Of all of these the most notable is Goethe's *Faust* (Part I, 1808; Part II, 1832), which he worked on throughout his long life.

Goethe's *Faust* was profoundly significant to Jung. In his autobiography he tells us,

> [I] realised with something of a shock [that *Faust] meant* more to me than my beloved Gospel according to St. John. There was something in *Faust* that worked directly on my feelings.[5]

And again,

> In my youth (around 1890) I was unconsciously caught up by this spirit of the age, and had no methods at hand for extricating myself from it. *Faust* struck a chord in me and pierced me through in a way that I could not but regard as personal. Most of all, it awakened in me the problem of opposites, of good and evil, of mind and matter, of light and darkness. Faust, the inept, purblind philosopher, encounters the dark side of his being, his sinister shadow, Mephistopheles, who in spite of his negating disposition represents the true spirit of life as against the arid scholar who hovers on the brink of suicide. My own inner contradictions

Downloaded by [Tulane University] at 09:40 03 January 2015

> appeared here in dramatized form; Goethe had written virtually a basic outline and pattern of my own conflicts and solutions. The dichotomy of Faust–Mephistopheles came together within myself into a single person, and I was that person. In other words, I was directly struck, and recognized that this was my fate. Hence, all the crises of the drama affected me personally; at one point I had passionately to agree, at another to oppose. No solution could be a matter of indifference to me. Later I consciously linked my work to what Faust had passed over: respect for the eternal rights of man, recognition of "the ancient," and the continuity of culture and intellectual history.[6]

As for Jung perhaps also for others, Geothe's *Faust* may be a gateway leading beyond the Christian eon.

Epilogue

> What makes Goethe's *Faust* so profoundly significant is that it formulates a problem that had been brewing for centuries, just as *Oedipus* did for the Greek sphere of culture: how to extricate ourselves from between the Scylla of world-renunciation and the Charybdis of its acceptance.
>
> —Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*

The basic themes that run throughout *Faust are:*

1) Descent to the underworld *(Nekyia);*
2) Love in all its aspects (libido);
3) The opposites: good and evil, beauty and ugliness, knowledge and innocence, spirit and matter, etc.;
4) The quaternity: the four elements, four-horse team, the axiom of Maria $(3 + 1)$, etc.;
5) The *coniunctio*: Faust and Gretchen, Oberon and Titania's golden wedding, Faust and Helen.

These are also the central motifs of alchemy and of the process of individuation. In particular Jung has singled out the *coniunctio*:

> [The main concern of alchemy is] the mystery of the *coniunctio,* or "chymical wedding," which runs through the whole of *Faust.* I have devoted a special work to this problem—*Mysterium Coniunctionis*. . . . It contains everything that forms the historical

Downloaded by [Tulane University] at 09:40 03 January 2015

> background—so far as this is alchemical—of *Faust.* These roots go very deep and seem to me to explain much of the numinous effect which emanates from Goethe's "main work."[7]

According to Jung[8] the forerunner of Goethe's *Faust* was *The Chemical Wedding* (1616) by Christian Rosencreutz, who also wrote a Faust drama. The hero of the latter is "a learned know-it-all who, disillusioned with the sciences, finally returns to Christianity."[9]

The Chemical Wedding is an alchemical allegory in which the protagonist, after a series of trials and ordeals which establish him as an elected one, is permitted to witness and participate in an elaborate procedure involving the death and regeneration of a royal couple. The process is very similar to that depicted by the *Rosarium* pictures,[10] with the additional feature that, as in Faust, the figure representing the ego intervenes in the *coniunctio* of the archetypal figures and suffers effects of that intervention. In *The Chemical Wedding* this happens when the protagonist slips into Venus' bedchamber and gazes on her naked beauty. He is later punished for this transgression by being sentenced to servitude as gate keeper of the *coniunctio* castle. This work, notes Jung, was "assuredly known to Goethe."[11]

In *Faust,* the product of the *coniunctio* is lost four times: 1) Gretchen murders her baby; 2) boy charioteer disappears in the flaming conclusion of the pageant; 3) Homunculus crashes in flames onto Galatea's throne; 4) Euphorion falls to his death. Evidently Goethe was able only to anticipate the *coniunctio* but not to achieve it. In a letter written to someone who did not appreciate the reality of *Faust*, Jung says,

> Obviously the processes in *Faust* are real. Such things cannot possibly be "wishful fantasies." They are on the contrary the material which, when it comes up in a man, can make him go mad. This is also true of the fourth stage of the transformation process[12]; the experience in the Beyond. It is an unconscious reality which in Faust's case was felt as being beyond his reach at the time, and for this reason it is separated from his real existence by death. It expresses the fact that he still had to "become a boy" and only then would he attain the highest wisdom. Euphorion stands for the future man who does not flee from the bond with the earth but is dashed to pieces on it, which means that he is not viable under the existing circumstances. Faust's death must therefore be taken as a fact. But like many a death it is really a mystery death which brings the imperfect to perfection.

Downloaded by [Tulane University] at 09:40 03 January 2015

> The Paris–Helen–Euphorion episode is actually the highest stage that the transformation process has reached, but not in itself the highest, for the element Euphorion has not been integrated into the Faust–Mephisto–Paris–Helen quaternity as the *quinta essential*.[13]

The Faust drama demonstrates that individuation is accompanied by guilt.[14] The danger is that when the guilt reaches consciousness it may overwhelm the ego with a sense of its own evil (negative inflation), a condition symbolized by the image "damnation to hell." Faust is spared that fate by the loving assistance of the Gretchen anima in heaven. In other words Faust's redemption is the result of an unconscious process. From the vantage point of depth psychology we can see how that process can be made conscious. The play begins with the "Prologue in Heaven," in which we learn that the whole drama is initiated by a divine wager between Mephistopheles and the Lord. This means that Faust's struggle for fulfillment originates in the Self, the transpersonal psyche. Thus the guilt incurred by the ego is shared by the Self. It is a necessary consequence of the process of coming to consciousness. In that process God (the Lord plus Mephistopheles) reveals his own nature and undergoes transformation through being seen.[15]

Faust was Jung's "heritage."[16] For all who claim to be Jungian, it will also be theirs. With all its darkness and ambiguity it is a "Jungian" story which passes on to all Jungians the task of repenting Faust's guilt and of rebuilding the shrine of Baucis and Philemon.

Notes

1. Running counter to. "I use the term enantiodromia for the emergence of the unconscious opposite in the course of time." (Jung, *Psychological Types,* CW 6, par. 709; CW refers throughout to *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung.)*
2. *Aion,* CW 9ii, par. 68.
3. Ibid., par. 149.
4. Biblical quotations are from the Authorized (King James) Version.
5. *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, p. 87.
6. Ibid., p. 235.
7. *Letters,* vol. 2, p. 246.
8. "The Psychology of the Transference," *The Practice of Psychotherapy,* CW 16, par. 500.
9. *The Symbolic Life*, CW 18, par. 1692.
10. See Jung, "The Psychology of the Transference," *The Practice of Psychotherapy*, CW 16.

Downloaded by [Tulane University] at 09:40 03 January 2015

11. Ibid., par. 407.
12. The fourth transformation of Faust—into Doctor Marianus—after his mysterious death (Part II, Act 5, last scene).
13. *Letters*, vol. 1, pp. 264f.
14. "Life itself is guilt" (Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, CW 14, par. 206).
15. See Edinger, *The Creation of Consciousness*, pp. 52ff, 91ff.
16. *Letters*, vol. 1, pp. 309f.

Downloaded by [Tulane University] at 09:40 03 January 2015